

**FINAL REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND
VETERANS' AFFAIRS**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington St., Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789**

November 2011

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FINAL REPORT

Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs

I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVES

The Indiana General Assembly enacted legislation (IC 2-5-20) directing the Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs (Commission) to study the following:

- (1) Matters relating to veterans and veterans' affairs.
- (2) Matters relating to the active and reserve members of the armed forces of the United States.

The Commission may also study other topics assigned by the Legislative Council or as directed by the Commission's chair.

The Commission is required to report the results of the Commission's study to the General Assembly before November 1 of each year.

The Commission consists of 12 members: four representatives; four senators; and four lay members. The chair of the Legislative Council appoints the chair of the Commission.

The Indiana General Assembly enacted HEA 1183 that requires the Commission to study veterans' procurement preferences in the state.

Additionally, the Indiana General Assembly also adopted HR 23 - 2011, which requires the Commission to study the needs of all returning Hoosier veterans.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM

The Commission was assigned no additional topics of study by the Legislative Council. The Commission met two times during the 2011 interim session: On August 31, 2011, and October 26, 2011.

III. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

The Commission heard testimony from Major General Umbarger of the Indiana National Guard. The testimony included updates on the National Guard, Camp Atterbury, the Muscatatuck Urban Training Complex, National Guard strength numbers, and the number of Hoosiers currently serving abroad.

The Commission also received an annual update from Mr. Tom Applegate, Director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) regarding the work of the agency over the year. Director Applegate provided the Commission information on the Military and Family Relief Fund (MFRF), an update on facilities managed by the DVA, and services offered to returning Hoosier veterans.

Director Applegate also provided the Commission with legislative recommendations for the 2012 session of the General Assembly. These recommendations included extending the duration or eligibility for hardship payments from the MFRF from one year to three years after a service member's active duty ends and extending MFRF benefits to members of the National Guard who are called for state active duty.

Ms. Nicole Kenney provided the Commission with a presentation on the Indiana Department of Administration's research into veteran procurement preferences offered in other states and the city of Indianapolis. The Commission also heard testimony from veteran business owners regarding the federal veteran procurement preference program and the impact this program has had on their respective businesses.

Representative Peggy Welch provided the Commission with information regarding issues facing women in the armed forces. Members of the Indiana National Guard were present to address how the National Guard handles instances of sexual harassment and assault.

The Commission also received a briefing regarding changes made by SB 577-2011 regarding tuition and fee remission for children of veterans.

IV. COMMISSION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission considered PD 3095 and PD 3099. PD 3095 would include members of the Indiana National Guard in the list of qualified service members who are eligible for assistance payments from the Military Family Relief Fund. PD 3099 extends the period during which qualified service members may receive assistance payments from the Military Family Relief Fund from one year to three years after the service member's active duty ends. The Commission voted to adopt PD 3095 and PD 3099, both with a vote of 8-0.

The Commission adopted the following recommendation for the final report:

The Commission recommends that legislation be introduced in the 2012 General Assembly that requires the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs, in consultation with the Indiana Department of Administration, to study veteran-owned business set-aside programs and procurement preferences, identify the types of veteran-owned businesses, and to recommend how a veteran-owned business set-aside program or procurement preference may be best utilized.

The Commission adopted the final report with a vote of 8-0.

WITNESS LIST

Major General Umbarger, Indiana National Guard
Tom Applegate, Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs
Nicole Kenney, Indiana Department of Administration
Representative Peggy Welch
James Schaefer, Lee and Ryan
Eric B. Dailey, National Veteran Small Business Coalition
Henry Maye, Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business
Lt. Col. Marcus Thomas, Indiana National Guard
Col. Deedra Thombleson, Indiana National Guard
Stephen Wise, Indiana Veterans' Affairs Commission